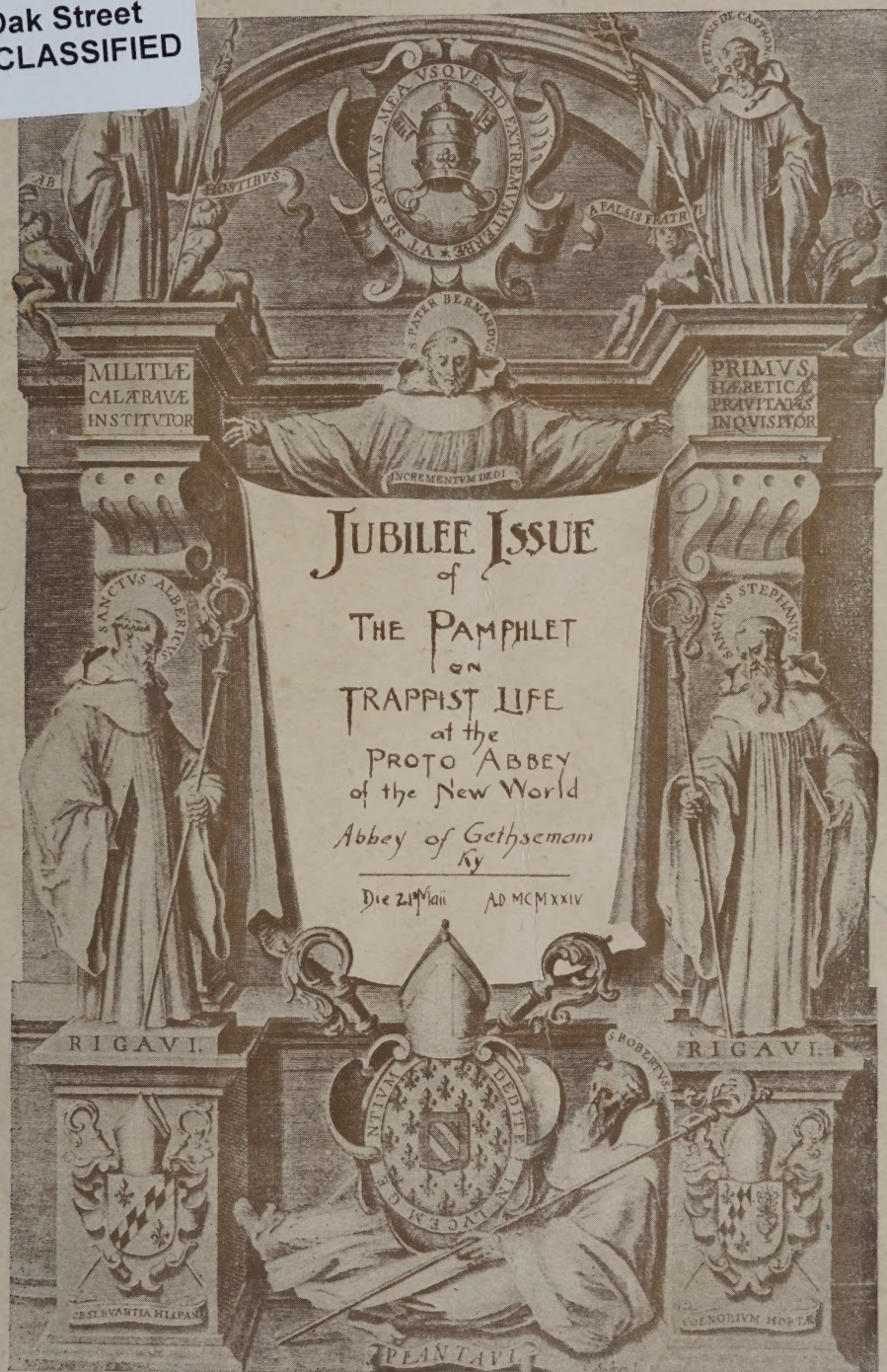


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INTERIOR OF THE ABBATIAL CHURCH  
Taken from the Lay Brothers' Choir.





Raymond Newcomb - Gethsemani, Ky. July 1926.

GUIDE TO POSTULANTS

FOR THE

Abbey of Our Lady of  
Gethsemani

(KENTUCKY)

R. NEWCOMB  
605 Nevada St.  
URBANA, ILL.

OF THE

Order of Reformed Cistercians  
commonly called "Trappists"

## Imprimatur

Cum permissu Reverendissimi D. Ioannis-Baptistae Ollitraut  
de Keryvallan, Abbatis Generalis Ordinis  
Cisterciensium Reformatorum.

† Fr. Edmundus M. Obrecht, O. C. R.,  
Abbas B. M. de Gethsemani,  
die 10<sup>a</sup> Februarii, 1924.

## NIHIL OBSTAT

† Ioannes A. Floersh, D. D.,  
Episcopus Coadiutor Ludovicopolitanensis,  
Die 7<sup>a</sup> Martii, 1924.

## Foreword to the Second Edition.

The first edition of the following pages having been exhausted, it has become necessary to print this second edition, which we offer to our prospective postulants in a particular manner, but also to our friends and all those who are interested in our manner of life. At the same time we wish to extend our sincere thanks for the kindly reception given to the first edition.

In substance there has been no change; some enlargements indeed have been incorporated into this issue, especially as regards our Lay-Brothers, but otherwise these are almost exclusively in the nature of fuller details and more explanations, in order to better attain the end we had in view, namely: to give a general idea of our Order; the object for which we live, and the manner of life with us. To this also we have added an appendix concerning the Nuns of our Order, for, although we deeply regret that these have not yet been introduced into the United States, yet the inquiries we have received regarding them show that many take a great deal of interest in that branch of our Order, an interest which they well merit by their fervor and exemplary observance of our Rules.

The felicitous occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Foundation of our Community here, which is commemorated this year, and recalling to mind the fact that this is the Proto-Abbey in America, that is to say, the first Monastery in the New World to receive from the Center of Christendom the privilege of having a Mitred Abbot at its head, give us ample grounds to renew our grateful acknowledgements for so many blessings received from God, and we pray that, with His favor, the fervor and prosperity of the community will increase with the lengthening years.

Feast of our Father, St. Robert,  
April Twenty-ninth, 1924.

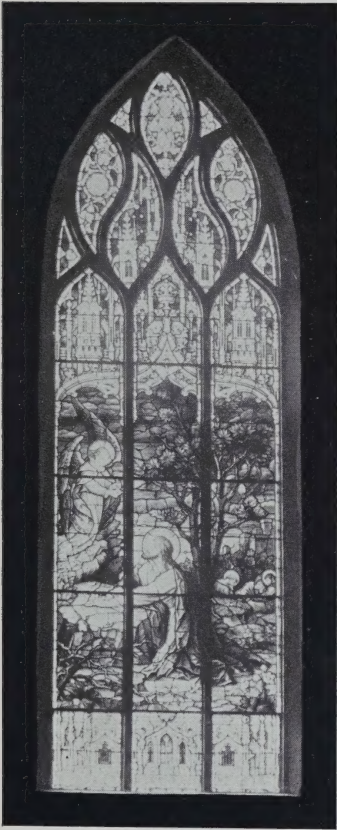
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## To the Reader



ONE OF THE CHURCH  
WINDOWS



IN PREPARING the few following pages we have made no pretense to write the history of our Order (The Reformed Cistercians, or Trappists) nor to give a full description of its observances or mode of living. Our object is merely to state some points under each of these heads, and to give an answer to the questions so often asked of us by souls seeking to find their vocation, or by their spiritual directors; hence they may be entitled a "Guide to Postulants" for our Order.

The need for such a guide is especially shown from the erroneous ideas frequently current, by the influence of which numbers are deterred from following the call of their conscience. One of the common forms of error thus suggested is that the Monastic Orders, and ours in particular, were good enough for the Middle Ages, but are unsuited to our modern times, and particularly so in America. But what is there in our rules that is not compatible with the life of today? Is it the life of prayer and contemplation—a life of penance and mortification, with the consequent union with

God? But this is precisely the most needed remedy for the ills of our strenuous modern life, where the heart of the majority is concerned with nothing but the business and pleasures of the present life; amounting to nothing less than practical materialism. This materialistic spirit is growing over the entire world, but nowhere is it more dominant than at our home in America. We too easily forget the deep lessons taught us by Holy Scripture: Whilst Moses was on the top of the hill (Deut. chap. 17, verse 11) he seemed to be profitless to Josue, who was fighting Amalec in the valley below, yet so long as he kept his arms extended the Israelites

were victorious, but so soon as he discontinued his prayer his people were overcome. This example expresses the principal object of our Order; vicarious penance and prayer.

Neither is it true that this spirit cannot be adapted to the American character, for more than half of the members of the Abbey of Gethsemani are native Americans, with this proportion constantly increasing; they show themselves happy in their vocation, as well as good and fervent religious.

A second misunderstanding is a popular belief that in order to be eligible for La Trappe one is presumed to be guilty of all the crimes possible, and has to retire to a monastery to expiate them. We admit willingly that all of us have not preserved the white robe of innocence; but alas! how many, even among the saints, particularly in our modern times, have not sinned? We must, therefore, embrace a life of penance, as there is no other way left for those who, after having offended God, wish to return to Him. In this sense we accept those guilty of sins, and sometimes of very grievous sins, but only in case there has been no notoriety or public scandal. We cannot admit criminals, as the rules of our Order and the laws of the Holy See are most stringent on this point. Even if we were free in this matter we should not do so, both on account of the name such subjects would bring on the monastery, and also because of the danger of scandalizing so many innocent souls faithfully serving God in their chosen vocation.

Our little work shall contain: first, a brief historical sketch of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, drawing the materials for it from documents we have here. Secondly, some ideas of religious life in general, and in particular of the great Order founded by St. Benedict, who is so justly termed the Father of the Monks of the West. Then of the Cistercian Order, the greatest branch of the Benedictines, and of which the Reformed Cistercians (Trappists) are the direct descendants. Finally, to close with a short description of our manner of life, reproducing for this purpose much of the matter contained in a booklet published a few years ago by one of our Monasteries in France, and approved by our General Chapter.

E. M. OBRECHT, Abbot.

From the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani,  
On the Feast of Blessed Humbeline,  
February the Twelfth, 1916.



## The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani.

Nestling among the knobs of Nelson County, surrounded by the very earliest landmarks of Catholicity in Kentucky, is to be found the home of the Trappists (as the Order of Reformed Cistercians is commonly called), the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani.

Its geographical situation is forty-nine miles south of Louisville, on the Knoxville branch of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, about



GENERAL VIEW OF THE ABBEY (East Side)

one and one-half miles north of the station known, after the Monastery, as Gethsemane. The location is ideal for the purpose intended, being remote from the noise and distractions of modern life, yet sufficiently near for all necessary intercourse with the outside world. The setting provided by nature could hardly be exceeded in attractiveness, without bordering on the sublime. The picturesque hills and valleys provide a pleasing variety, and when these are fresh with the mantling verdure of Spring and Summer, or gorgeous with the parti-colored splendors of the early Fall, they form a picture that raises the soul almost instinctively to the thoughts of our Heavenly home, making even the most severe penance seem but a light price to pay for what we hope will be ours in the future.

The plainness of construction, combined with stately size, gives a befitting air of gravity to the monastic buildings; all tending to eliminate from the mind the desire for vain show, ostentation and useless ornamentation, which would be so out of harmony with the spirit of severe simplicity so much loved by the early Cistercians. Yet there is not wanting in them a certain beauty, the charm of which grows by study and a better understanding of them, and, as it were, an imbibing of the lessons they are there to teach.

In the year 1848, the Monastery of Melleray, in France, was in the face of a grave crisis. In numbers it was great; indeed it could scarcely contain those whom it called its children. This crowded condition made it imperative to found a new monastery for them, and the fear as to the outcome of the Revolution of that year, caused them to consider the advisability of seeking a home in some foreign land. Hence, at the earnest solicitation of Msgr. Flaget, the saintly Bishop of Louisville, it was decided to send a colony to his Diocese in the New World.

For this purpose Dom Maxime, then Abbot of Melleray, placed the Reverend Father Eutropius Proust at the head of a band of forty religious, (supplemented a few years later by another company of fourteen) whom he was to lead, after many vicissitudes, to a farm that had been purchased for them from the Sisters of Loretto, at the place above described.

On October 26, 1848, the new community left their beloved Melleray for their future home in the United States. The trials of the little company from the Abbey to Havre, their port of embarkation, were many, as the means of travel in those days were primitive, according to our manner of judging things. Finally, however, all were on board ship and the ocean voyage began on November 2. After a passage that was then considered rapid, they reached New Orleans December 6, deploring the loss of one of their number at sea, he having fallen a victim to disease. The last part of the journey was made by steamboat, up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, to Louisville, and by wagons from that city, by way of Bardstown, to Gethsemani, where they arrived, footsore and weary, on December 20, 1848, and made their official, though humble, beginning of the community in America.

The first years of the new establishment were painful to the extreme, for the virgin forest, and almost barren land, had to be worked into a condition fit for cultivation by men wholly unacquainted with the peculiar needs of a strange country and unfamiliar climate.

However, such progress was made that the new foundation was soon assured of its future, and, the requisite formalities having been complied



with, it was canonically erected into an Abbey by His Holiness, Pope Pius IX., the date of the Rescript being July 21, 1850, making this the Proto-Abbey in any part of the New World. Dom Eutropius Proust, as soon as proper arrangements could be made, was elected its Abbot and, as soon as the election had received proper confirmation, was Solemnly Blessed, October 26, 1851, by his Lordship, the Right Reverend Martin John Spalding, then Bishop of Louisville who thus had the distinction of being the first person to have imparted to him the Abbatial Benediction in the Western Hemisphere.

After having been thus recognized and encouraged, the new community set to work at the construction of adequate buildings, to replace



GENERAL VIEW OF THE ABBEY (West Side)

the old log structures that were rapidly falling into decay. This proved to be an almost superhuman undertaking, as the immense quantity of bricks needed were all to be made on the place, and the timber had to be cut and hewn from the forest, whilst the resources with which to meet these expenses were slender indeed. To the natural difficulties were added still greater ones arising from the Civil War, which broke out whilst they were in the midst of their work. Still, with the help Providence sent them, they were able to complete everything, and on November 15, 1866, the Most Reverend J. B. Purcell, D. D., Archbishop of Cincinnati, consecrated the church and dedicated the monastery to the service of God.

The Most Reverend Martin J. Spalding, D. D., Archbishop of Baltimore, the firm friend of the Trappists, preached an eloquent sermon on the occasion, after having made the long trip expressly for this purpose. The Right Rev. P. J. Lavielle, Bishop of Louisville, with the Right Rev. J. Timmon, Bishop of Buffalo, and the Right Rev. Bruno Fitzpatrick, Abbot of Mt. Melleray in Ireland, consecrated the various side altars. Besides these there were many distinguished members of both the secular and regular clergy present, as well as a large concourse of the laity.

The difficulties attending the original foundation having been recounted, there remains but little of interest to the general reader to be noted by the historian.

Certainly Gethsemani had its days of brighter joy, interspersed with those of more somber sadness, but in all could be recognized the fatherly hand of God, purifying, directing or encouraging the work which had no other end than Himself. However, the life was found hard and so contrary to the spirit of those early days that very few postulants persevered; and even among the number of original colonists the ravages of death were felt; whilst others, discouraged by the excessive difficulties in a totally new and strange land, abandoned the life, so that the community became numerically greatly reduced. But as the spirit of Catholicity spread in the country, and also because of certain mitigations introduced by authority of His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII, the number began to augment, so that, at present, there are between eighty and ninety in the community.

To Dom Eutropius, the first Abbot, succeeded Dom Benedict Berger, who, from the date of his election, 1859, administered the affairs of the Monastery for nearly thirty years, upholding in the community zeal for religious observances and the spirit of prayer and penance, the two main supports of the Order. Broken at length by age and infirmities he resigned his pastoral charge on September 2, 1889, and peacefully slept in the Lord on August 13th of the following year.

The third Abbot of the house, Dom Edward Chaix-Bourbon, was elected May 9, 1890. To him were not granted the years of his venerable predecessor, still his personal holiness of life became an inspiration to good for all who were privileged to come in contact with him. Never of robust health, his strength gave way completely under the weight of cares and anxieties that accumulated from many sources. He spent a few years in France, in order to recuperate, but, not succeeding, he resigned in 1898, and was replaced by the writer of these lines, who was first appointed Superior and later elected Abbot, receiving the Abbatial Benediction in



the Abbey Church, from the Right Reverend W. G. McCloskey, D. D., then Bishop of Louisville, on October 28, 1898.

During these years it has been the present incumbent's humble purpose to consolidate and bring to an ever increasing perfection the good work begun by predecessors so worthy, fully realizing that though man may plant and water, yet to God alone is due the increase.

It may not be amiss to add a few words concerning the school formerly attached to the Monastery.

This school was begun in 1851 as a day school for the poor children of the neighborhood, who were then wholly without the means of acquiring



ABBAY GATE AND ENTRANCE

even the rudiments of a Christian education. Later on, at the request of many amongst its benefactors and patrons, it was made a boarding institution, and still later a College, with power from the State to confer the usual academic degrees. But these conditions were always objected to by the Superiors of the Order, and they only tolerated what seemed to be a necessary evil, as it is entirely against the spirit of the Order to conduct such institutions.

Some of our monasteries, it is true, still have schools connected with them, but they always prove more or less of a detriment to many

of the community observances, and are only permitted where local needs really demand them. This need has long since been remedied, so far as Gethsemani is concerned, by the establishment of a sufficient number of both day and boarding schools in the vicinity; so that when, in 1912, the college and school buildings were entirely destroyed by fire, it was decided that they be not reconstructed.

Since its establishment Gethsemani, like all monasteries of the Order, has always been pleased to receive members of both clergy and laity for a few days of spiritual rest and recollection. Later on there was also opened a department for the reception of clergymen who, at the direction of their Ordinaries, were to make retreats of greater or lesser duration as a disciplinary measure. This latter institution, though serving a useful purpose, prevented the inauguration of regular public retreats, for both clergymen and laymen, so much desired. Hence, in 1921, the reception of permanent boarders was definitely discontinued, and the guest department opened to regular public, as well as private, retreats.

The Knights of Columbus, so generous and zealous in every good work, were the first to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered. Their "Week-End Retreats" being the earliest important movement in this line, there being a series of these inaugurated in July, 1921, under the auspices of the Louisville Council. The three "Week-Ends" of that year were attended by over one hundred retreatants, composed of Knights and other laymen, even a few non-Catholics followed faithfully all the exercises. These were so satisfactory the first year that, in 1922, there were four retreats, attended by greater numbers, and it was decided to make them a permanent institution. As the good that has been accomplished becomes better known, other societies are considering plans for the same work amongst their members; and last, but not least, several among the secular clergy have made overtures with a view of making their own regular retreats within the walls of the monastic enclosure.



## Origin of the Monastic Orders—Especially of the Benedictines.

THE MONKS—Our Blessed Saviour, who came down from Heaven to show us the way of salvation by His words and example, has deigned to open for us two ways to reach eternal life. The one within the reach of all, which consists in the observance of the precepts, and which must necessarily be followed by everyone who wishes to avoid hell and gain



SHRINE IN THE FRONT GARDEN

Heaven; "If thou wilt enter into life," says Jesus Christ, "keep the commandments". (St. Matt. XIX, 17) The other, more perfect and therefore more meritorious, adds to the precepts the practice of the Evangelical Counsels, which contain the essence of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which are the bases of the religious life. The Fathers, the Doctors and the Councils have peremptorily affirmed that the religious state has been instituted by Jesus Christ Himself, and is therefore of divine origin.

They base their affirmation on the words of Our Lord to the young man in the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . .

and come follow me." (St. Matt. XIX, 21); and on His answer to St. Peter: "And everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (St. Matt. XIX 29.).

The end for which the religious state was instituted is most exalted, and the means for attaining this end are most effective. The end is to love and serve God in a perfect manner, and to sing His praises without intermission. The means are the religious vows. The life is an imitation of the occupation of the Blessed in Heaven. Like these the religious, in so far as their present imperfect condition permits, are wholly and continually intent on serving God and proclaiming His praises in hymns and canticles. St. Lawrence Justinian says: "Here on earth, in our present pilgrimage, we find nothing that gives a truer representation of our heavenly home than the religious life of a community which has dedicated itself to the service of God." St. Jerome says, "That Christ and the Apostles were the first Religious." St. John Chrysostom makes the same remark. St. Thomas assures us that the Apostles bound themselves by vow to the practice of the Evangelical Counsels, on the day they gave up everything to follow their Divine Master.

But it was especially when the persecutions against Christians ceased that great numbers of both men and women began to people the most frightful solitudes to secure for themselves, by slow martyrdom, the eternal crown which the persecutors of the Church failed to give them by the shedding of their blood for Christ's sake. Among these angels of the solitudes some lived absolutely isolated and alone, and bore the name of "Anchorets"; St. Paul, the Hermit, was the first. Others came together to live in a community, under the guidance of a superior, and according to the constitution of a rule; these were called "Cenobites". They recognize St. Anthony as the promulgator of their form of life. The number of these gradually increased, and was very considerable ere the end of the third century, but in the fourth it became immense, so that the deserts presented the appearance of cities inhabited by an assemblage of holy solitaries. The whole life of these predestined souls may be summed up in these few words: prayer, meditation, watching, fasting, labor, silence and retirement the most complete.

From the East they extended themselves to the West, spreading over the different parts of Europe. Through the efforts of St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, who visited Rome in 340, several monasteries were founded in that city and other places in Italy. In Gaul, St. Martin founded a monastery near Poitiers in 362. Whilst Archbishop of Tours,

in 375, he founded the monastery of Marmoutier, and when he died, 397, two thousand monks from his and neighboring monasteries, followed his venerated remains to the tomb.

About the end of the fifth century the simple splendors of the monastic discipline began to be tarnished; the natural inclination of the human mind to the fleeting pleasures of the world, persecutions of various kinds, and the many disasters occasioned by the incursions of the Huns and Vandals—all these causes, together with many others, weakened the



SANCTUARY OF THE ABBATIAL CHURCH

monastic discipline and introduced, little by little, relaxation in the cenobitical form of life. It was in the midst of these circumstances that God, in His mercy, raised up St. Benedict, who may justly be called the light of the desert, the Apostle of Monte Cassino, the restorer of monastic discipline in the West; just as St. Anthony had been the Father of it in the East.

ST. BENEDICT—The great legislator for the monks of the West was St. Benedict. Born of noble parentage in the year 480, his family



took up residence in Rome while the child was of tender age, in order that he might have the advantage of good education. There he made solid progress in piety and learning, but the more he advanced in the way of God, the more he became disgusted with the world and its dangers.

Monasticism was not new at this time, indeed it was in full bloom in the East; nor was it unknown in the West. Such a life had, for the generous child, a deep attraction; so at the age of about fourteen years, he retired to a grotto, called Subiaco, in order to live there as a hermit. After having spent some years in this abode his place of retreat was discovered by others, and little by little disciples began to join him, until he was obliged to establish twelve small monasteries in the vicinity for their accommodation. The trial of persecution, however, was not wanting to him, so by the envy of a man of ill-will he was compelled to leave his solitude and seek an asylum at Monte Cassino (529). There he founded the most celebrated of all monasteries; the cradle of the Benedictine Order and the head of monasticism in the West. There also he composed that admirable book, the "Holy Rule", which was the codified form of his own method of government; the wisdom and perfection of which, coupled to its wonderful discretion, has been praised by saints of all succeeding ages, and which has contributed to the sanctification of multitudes of elect souls.

St. Benedict not only caused his rule to be observed in all his monasteries, he also began its propagation in foreign and distant lands, by means of his disciples. Thus he sent St. Placidus to establish it in Sicily, and, at the solicitation of the Bishop of Mans, he ordered St. Maur to proceed to France, so as to make it known in that country also. There the first monastery was founded at Granfeuil, (in the Diocese of Angers) later on better known as "St. Maur on the Loire". From this radiating point Benedictine monasteries were established in many places in France and the neighboring countries, and soon also they absorbed the houses of the religious who had preceded them, for this great Rule was destined to replace that of almost all others, as well as become the base of the greater number of other rules of the religious institutes of the middle ages and modern times.

Besides cultivating the lands, the Benedictines also applied themselves to the arts and sciences; although in the earliest days of their existence they were particularly engaged in clearing up the forests and wild lands, where they had been called to establish their houses. One may well say that it was the Benedictines, and those who preceded them, who transformed and fertilized the soil of France.

As the price for their labors, and due also to the generosity of the faithful, they became possessed of great estates and vast wealth, and

although these were used with unstinted liberality to aid the poor, nevertheless they proved to be the rock upon which, by gradual degrees, the primitive fervor and discipline were wrecked. From religious, more than from others, God requires that we should use worldly goods merely in passing, and in order to reach those ends which are heavenly and eternal.

This decadence was also caused by the lack of surveillance and control; each Benedictine monastery being entirely autonomous. There were efforts, generous and glorious, to stem this devastating torrent, such as the



GENERAL VIEW OF THE NAVE  
Taken from the Sanctuary.

reform of St. Benedict of Aniane (750-821). Sovereign Pontiffs, Kings, Princes, Councils and even Abbots tried many times to oppose the ruin, and to work for the restoration of discipline, but the results were of relatively short duration. When the reform of Cluny was inaugurated (910) the practice of the Rule was far from its primitive purity, and it was exceedingly difficult to restore it completely, although this was, doubtless, the most successful of all attempts up to that time. Certainly the most

known and honored Benedictine monasteries of the eleventh Century were Cluny and St. Denis; these names, as well as their illustrious work and example, are so well known in history that no one is ignorant of them.

However, when we speak of relaxation in the observance of the Rule, it must not be understood that grave disorders are referred to, neither of the abandonment of the regular life. That which we speak of was a too easy interpretation of the Rule; certain observances that were evidently opposed to the spirit of our holy Legislator; the introduction of new customs and a more comfortable manner of living, which contrasted strangely with the simple poverty of monastic life. Nevertheless religious virtue still shone brilliantly in many monasteries, and if the life had become softened it was still worthy of esteem and honor.

## History of Citeaux—Its Foundation—Growth— Decline—Reform.

CITEAUX—From these virtues, fruits of fidelity to the existing observances, sprang desires for a still more perfect return to the original Rule, for even Cluny had not persevered in its mitigated Reform. With this end in view a Benedictine Abbot, by the name of Robert, of the Reformed Observance of Cluny, founded the monastery of Molesme (1075) in the diocese of Langres, in order that the holy Rule might be there practised to the letter. But Molesme, say the chronicles, in its turn became rich and discipline grew relaxed. Then the holy and zealous reformer, St. Robert, associated with himself twenty of the more fervent religious, and went to the diocese of Chalon-sur-Saone (1098), where, with the authorization of Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons and Legate of the Holy See, he founded an establishment which he called the "New Monastery". There he was finally enabled to put into practise his pious aspirations for the perfect observance of the Holy Rule. This was the origin of Citeaux, as the "New Monastery" was henceforth called. But in accomplishing this work Robert of Molesme doubtless never suspected that he had laid the foundations of a new Order, which was to give great glory to God and be a powerful support of and honor to Holy Church. Both he, and his two immediate successors in the government of Citeaux, Alberic and Stephen, are canonized Saints. Under the second abbot, St. Alberic, (died in 1109), the religious of Citeaux took the white habit, as they now wear it. St. Benedict indeed considered the color and quality of clothing





GROUP OF CHOIR RELIGIOUS  
March, 1924.

as a matter of little importance, since he says in his Rule: (Chap. 55) "Let not the monks complain as to the color or texture of their clothing." So both white and black are equally regular.

Fearing lest his monastery should be troubled in the observance of his reform or even of its existence, St. Alberic asked of Pope Paschal II, that he might be pleased to take it under the protection of the Holy See (1100). It is therefore beyond doubt that the Cistercians were only Benedictines "reformed and transformed".

It was also to St. Alberic that the Order owes the introduction of "Lay-Brothers". These are they who because of a special attraction, or out of love for humility or, finally, for want of the required studies, do not wish or cannot be admitted to the choir. They wear a brown woolen habit, instead of the white of the choir religious, and are more especially occupied with those material labors the doing of which would prevent the priests from fulfilling their choir duties.

The lay-brothers are religious in the full sense of the word, although not, strictly speaking, monks, and after the necessary novitiate make simple vows, to be followed later by solemn profession, just the same as the choir religious. They observe the same rules and share fully in all the spiritual privileges of those in the choir, except that they will never be called to the priesthood. Their time for manual labor is somewhat longer than that allotted to the choir members, amounting to about eight hours a day, but leaving sufficient occasion for prayer and spiritual reading. The divine office for them consists of certain prayers, easily remembered, as prescribed by our Ritual and Constitutions, and which they recite together at the various hours during the day when the canonical office is chanted in church. They are a source of edification to all, many distinguishing themselves for their deep piety and solid virtue, and in times past a goodly number of them have been honored by the Church as saints and blessed.

St. Stephen Harding, an Englishman, the third Abbot of Cîteaux, had the honor of receiving St. Bernard and his companions into the religious life, and is, properly speaking, the founder of the Order. He established the General Chapters, the annual visitation of every monastery, and regulated the relations between the new foundations and the houses from which they were formed. It was he who rendered the general government of the Order more stable by his Charter of Charity, which was approved by Pope Calixtus II, in 1119. Many monasteries were founded by Cîteaux under his administration, the most famous of which was Clairvaux, whose first Abbot, St. Bernard (1091-1153) so distinguished himself by his virtues, works and doctrine that he was looked upon by

many as the founder of that Order of which he was the greatest light. The history of those times is full of his apostolic labors through France, Italy and Germany for the peace of the Church and the honor of the Papacy. He is also counted among the Fathers of the Church, because of his genius and immortal writings.

**GROWTH**—The Order of Citeaux increased with great rapidity; several Benedictine monasteries adopted its constitutions, and in some cases whole Congregations passed under its rule; such as Savigny and



INTERIOR OF THE CLOISTER (West Side)

Obazine in 1147, and Dalon in 1162. In a short time France, Italy, Germany, Spain, England, Ireland, Scotland, Poland and other countries were peopled with Cistercian monasteries.

Many churches asked and obtained that their chief pastors be taken from these monasteries. Several of their members were raised to the Cardinalate, and, later on, even Rome chose its Pontiffs from their numbers.

Kings and queens, as well as other high personages, gloried in bestowing upon them magnificent foundations, and even there were not



wanting some amongst them to resign their positions, in order to embrace the humble Cistercian life.

The Orders of Knighthood of the Middle Ages, which were especially famous in Spain and Portugal, were affiliated or subject to that of Citeaux; St. Bernard himself traced out the rule for the Templars.

These were the heroic times of the Order. For nearly a century the primitive fervor of Citeaux never relaxed. Scrupulous observers of the Rule of St. Benedict, the Cistercians prayed, studied and labored.

The ancient Abbeys of the Order still remaining, as well as the ruins of so many others, testify to their taste for a form of architecture that was grand, yet severe in style. The lands which they cultivated are even now amongst the most fertile in those localities where they established themselves. Thus to the Cistercian Order is due the credit for a renewed impulse in monastic life.

DECLINE—But unfortunately there came for the Order a period of decline. Wealth and immense possessions opened a breach to relaxations; primitive simplicity disappeared. Once entered upon this way, the Order was rapidly precipitated from its former high standing.

Many unfavorable events contributed to this. The war of the "Cent Ans" (war of a hundred years) 1334–1459, then the "Commendam" introduced into the Order about the end of the 15th Century, and finally the religious strifes (1552–1598), successively or simultaneously, had caused decadence to set in in France. Nevertheless the Order, although fallen from its first fervor, still merited well of holy Church. The Sovereign Pontiffs, amongst whom was Innocent VIII (1489) enriched it with many precious and advantageous privileges, both as regards spiritual favors and exterior distinctions.

During these troubles Citeaux, having put aside the Charter of Charity of St. Stephen, had been divided into several Congregations. Spain, Portugal and Italy separated first, either to preserve a more strict observance, or through desire of autonomy and independence; later on Germany, following their example, acted similarly. Even in France the Order divided into two branches; the Cistercians proper and the Feuillants. The latter, reformed by Jean de la Barriere in 1586, spread into Italy and followed a rule of extreme severity, more strict than the primitive rule of Citeaux. There were also other reforms here and there, sometimes of small groups of houses, or even single monasteries, but all animated with the one object of restoring the original simplicity of the first fathers of the Order, but their effects were not general.

During the seventeenth century the Order of Citeaux, properly speaking, was divided in two Congregations, the Common and the Strict

Observance. The latter was also called the observance of the Abstainers because they strictly abstained from the use of flesh-meat, as prescribed by the Rule of St. Benedict. It was begun by Denis Largentier, Abbot of Clairvaux, in 1615, and numbered more than fifty monasteries under its rule, and was for a long time in a flourishing condition.

REFORM—The Abbey of La Grande Trappe belonged to the Strict Observance. It had formed a part of the ancient Benedictine Congregation of Savigny, dating its foundation from the year 1140. Jean-Armand le Bouthillier de Rance (1626-1700) who was first its Comendatory Abbot, then its Regular Superior, rendered it famous. He



INTERIOR CLOISTER GARDEN

made a reform within the reform itself; for the monasteries of the Strict Observance, although united, had but little uniformity in their usages and regulations. He prepared for his religious very precise regulations which interpreted the Rule of St. Benedict, and re-established, as far as possible, the primitive Cistercian Constitutions; although, as de Rance himself acknowledged, he did not actually impose the full severity of our first Fathers, as the circumstances of the times would not permit this. His reform, which had penetrated as far as Tuscany in 1700, lasted until the French Revolution. On account of its fervor and regularity it was, on

the part of the "Directoire", very near being the object of an exception to the general decree of abolition against the religious orders, but finally it was forced to succumb.

God, however, wished to preserve La Trappe as a seed for the future. There was amongst its religious a man of valor, energy and courage, Dom Augustine de Lestrange. He resolved to save the community by transferring it to Switzerland, and for this purpose obtained from the Magistrates of Fribourg the ancient Chartreuse monastery of "la Val-Sainte", and settled there with twenty-four religious who had accompanied him. He made very severe regulations; the letter of the Rule of St. Benedict was enforced; the hours for meals, the time of work; in one word, all its strictness was adopted. They even surpassed it in several points in their indiscreet fervor.

Pius VI encouraged the Reform of la Val-Sainte, without, however, giving it the authority of a formal approbation. Attempts at foundations in Spain, Italy, England and America show the force of expansion of this new Congregation.

Driven from la Val-Sainte by the wars of Napoleon I, Dom Augustine was obliged to wander with his communities into Austria, Bavaria, Poland and even into Russia, leaving, here and there, remnants that later became foundations. Thus was established Westmalle in 1794, which afterwards became the head of the Congregation in Belgium.

Obliged to fly once more, he transferred his proscribed communities into England and, later (1811) into America, leaving behind him the foundations of several monasteries. When peace was restored, he returned to France and secured the two monasteries of La Trappe and Aiguebelle. At the latter he placed the religious of Val-Sainte, himself remaining at La Trappe, which thus became the head of the new Congregation and gave it its definitive name. Elsewhere new monasteries were founded: Melleray, Port-du-Salut, Sept-Fons, Mount of Olives etc., some following the regulations of de Rance, others, those of Val-Sainte, with some slight modifications.

The Trappists, as they were now called, multiplied both in and out of France. Later, in 1847, they formed three Congregations, namely: La Grande Trappe and Sept-Fons in France, with that of Westmalle in Belgium. The first kept the ancient Usages of Citeaux; the other two, the regulations introduced by the Reform of de Rance; all based on the Rule of St. Benedict. However, the differences in the observances among the Congregations were more apparent than real. Everyone felt the necessity of fusion of the several branches, and all desired it. His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII., was most anxious to have this union consummated,



hence, on his initiative, a General Chapter of the three Congregations met at Rome, October 1, 1892, and after arduous and generous efforts on the part of all the union, so long desired, was effected, the Holy Father confirming the decisions arrived at with such admirable concord. After this reunion of the several Congregations into one Order had been concluded, the General Chapter elected the Most Reverend D. Sebastian Wyart, O. C. R., who had been a tireless worker for this much-desired end, as the first Abbot-General. After a wise and prudent administration of the affairs of the Order of over ten years, he was called to his reward in 1904.



CORNER OF THE INTERIOR ABBEY GARDEN

His immediate successor was the Most Reverend D. Augustin Marre, O. C. R., Abbot of Igny and Auxiliary-Bishop to the Archbishop of Reims. Broken in health by eighteen years of unrelenting labor and anxiety, especially those accruing during the World-War, this latter resigned his charge in 1922, and in 1923, as a token of the esteem of the Holy See for his merits and faithful work, he was promoted to the Archiepiscopal See of Mitylene. To him succeeded the Most Reverend D. Jean-Baptiste Ollitrault de Keryvallan, O. C. R., who is now administering the affairs of the Order in a manner worthy of his illustrious predecessors.

La Trappe thus became an Order distinct from the Cistercians of the Common Observance, and was to retain its own independent General

in perpetuity. In 1894 the Constitutions of the new Order were approved by the Holy See. Finally, in 1902, an Apostolic Constitution declared the Trappists to be the "True Cistercians", having a right to all the privileges of the ancient Order. The old monastery of Citeaux, having been repurchased in 1898, the same Constitution established that henceforth the General of the Order, though residing in Rome, would take the title of Abbot of Citeaux. The Pope gave the new Order the name of "Reformed Cistercians, or of the Strict Observance". The Reformed Cistercians thus follow the Rule of St. Benedict, the Charter of Charity and the recent Constitutions approved by the Holy See.

## Life of the Reformed Cistercians—Rules and Observances as Kept at Gethsemani Abbey.

The founders of Citeaux left Molesme to follow the Rule of St. Benedict more strictly and more perfectly; the Abbe de Rance and Dom Augustin de Lestrange inaugurated their reforms for the same end. Heirs to their works and glory, it behooves the Reformed Cistercian to be also heirs to their fervor and zeal. St. Benedict imposes on his disciples a life of seclusion from the world and of union with God by prayer, mortification, study, spiritual reading and manual labor; such must be their life. It is the contemplative life, admitted by all to be the most perfect. However, contemplation in our Order is somewhat allied to action, on account of the manual labor, as well as the various trades and occupations exercised in the cloister. Still, though this activity does not extend beyond the limits of the community, yet it is of very great advantage insofar as it gives a rest to the mind, thus affording it the relaxation so often necessary; replacing the recreation allowed in other Orders and Institutes.

**PRAYER**—Prayer is an essential and almost continual occupation of religious, prescribed by the very nature of their vocation. It gives to the soul peace, joy and happiness in elevating it to its Creator and Father; hence, a religious must be a man of prayer. Prayer under all its forms will be rightly the first and most noble occupation of the Cistercian Monk. All his care and attention must be given first to the Divine Office, which the Rule of St. Benedict calls the "Opus Dei" (Work of God), and which is the most excellent of all prayers. To sign psalms, hymns and canticles is the office and occupation of the Heavenly Spirits. St. John tells us that the Angels surround the throne of God to adore, praise and glorify Him,

and in this way to manifest to Him their love; hence St. Bonaventure calls the sacred psalmody an imitation of the musical harmonies of heaven. St. Bernard does not hesitate to assert that the angels take their places in the midst of those who sign psalms in choir. The Divine Office is also a most devout and touching form of prayer, because the psalms, and very frequently only single verses of them, are replete with holy emotions of the soul, or most sublime and diversified acts of virtue, corresponding to the three stages of the spiritual life, and adapted to almost every possible condition and circumstance that we may meet with. The Order of Citeaux



GROUP OF LAY BROTHERS  
March, 1924.

has its own Breviary, arranged according to the Rule of St. Benedict, and notably different from the Roman. For the Missal, however, since the seventeenth century the Roman "Ordo Missae" has been adopted.

To honor more especially the Mother of God, for whom the Cistercian Order has always shown a most tender devotion, the "Little office of the Blessed Virgin" is daily recited in choir; so that every canonical hour is preceded by the corresponding hour in honor of our Blessed Mother.

Devotion for the Holy Souls in Purgatory has always been a distinguishing characteristic of Citeaux. Besides the Commemoration of



All Souls, November 2d, there are four other Solemn Anniversaries during the year, on which the office of the Dead, as well as High Mass, is sung. The office of the Dead is further recited frequently in choir, about six times a month on an average. The Divine Office and High Mass take up about six hours of the daily life of the religious.

READING—After prayer, St. Benedict prescribes what he calls *spiritual reading*, “*Lectio divina*.” His way of recommending it, and the length of time consecrated to this exercise, show what great importance the Rule attaches to this monastic duty. Between the various regular occupations, there is some free time or *interval* which the religious devote to their private devotions, intercourse with their superiors and to serious reading.

Our Order has been reproached with neither loving study nor applying itself to it; but this is a grave error. The Benedictine Rule, our past record and our Constitutions prove the contrary. The manuscripts of our fathers, their rich libraries, the colleges which they established, their literary works, even those composed during the time of great fervor, show their taste, their varied learning, and the importance they attach to intellectual culture in the Order. Strictly speaking the religious may devote to study about five hours daily during the winter exercises, and somewhat less in summer. But on Sundays and holidays, he has the free use of the time which is not taken up by the church offices and regular exercises. For the professed, especially priests, the studies are free, though not without supervision; as to the novices and young religious, they are directed with a view to their formation in the religious life.

There are in the monasteries monthly conferences on Theology and Sacred Scriptures for priests and clerics. Besides these there are regularly organized classes where the full Seminary courses are given to those preparing for sacred orders.

LIBRARY—The monastic library at Gethsemani had been unsatisfactory; the few religious books, mostly in French, brought out by the founders from France, were far from supplying the actual needs of the community; so in 1898 an appeal was sent out to various Colleges, Institutions and priests who, as a rule, responded liberally. Several of these latter bequeathed us private libraries, others sent duplicates. In 1901, however, the most valuable addition was made by the generous donation of the late Monsignor Leonard Batz, former Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. This consisted of over 40,000 volumes, with subjects well diversified and the books in perfect condition. To this splendid collection there has been a constant increase, especially in works relating to the Cistercian Order and the writings of St. Bernard. Precious in-

cunabula, priceless manuscripts and rare old liturgical gems have caused this library to be, of its kind, by far the most valuable in the United States, and one of the most noted in the world. Modern Catholic authors also, especially on Theology, Liturgy and Canon Law, have not been neglected.

**MANUAL LABOR**—Although the Divine Office is the proper and peculiar employment of the choir religious, yet manual labor is also one of their occupations, and it has always been considered to be of very great importance in the Benedictine Code. It is in living by the labor of his



THE CHAPTER ROOM

hands, says our great law-giver, that the religious shows himself to be truly a monk; and God himself has imposed this as a penance on fallen human nature. But even besides these reasons, it is of great utility, contributing to the physical health as well as moral well being. For the choir religious about four hours each day is allotted to this exercise, divided equally between the morning and evening hours. For our lay-brothers the work lasts about eight hours daily.

**SLEEP**—The Rule allows the religious seven hours of sleep at night in winter, and six in summer; but, in this latter case, the hour taken

from the night rest is replaced by an equivalent repose during the day, after dinner. On ordinary days the hour of rising is at 2 o'clock, and on feast days or Sunday it is 1, or 1:30, according to the solemnity.

St. Benedict requires that the monk should take his repose fully dressed, removing only his shoes, and on a straw mattress rendered hard by being quilted or tufted. All sleep in a common dormitory, but each one has a separate cell, partitioned off from the others, and closed in front by a curtain.

**MEALS**—The idea prevails in the world that fasts and abstinence are perpetual with the Trappists. Such is not the case, at least in regard to fasts; although all in good health must abstain from flesh-meat and fish at all times. Still, some concessions have been made in favor of our rather weak constitutions as regards the hour of meals; the principal repast is never delayed beyond 12 o'clock, even in Lent. According to the season, a supper or simple collation is served in the evening. It is also allowed to give something in the morning to those who need it; and young men, under twenty-one years of age, are not obliged to fast, the Rule providing something extra for them.

The Holy See, in approving our Constitutions, has, in its wisdom, modified the austerities suggested by St. Benedict. In lessening the fasts and privations, which in our days could not be endured, it has permitted a larger number of souls to enter our Order, for which they feel an attraction both sweet and powerful.

The ordinary food consists of vegetables, cereals and the products of the dairy. Eggs may be served in the community, but only as a supplementary dish for those who have a special need. The food may also be seasoned with butter or oil. The Rule permits the use of flesh-meat to the sick, the weak and to those who need it to repair their strength, but in the infirmary only.

**COMMON LIFE**—The austerity of Cistercian life consists especially in fidelity to the common exercises. Other corporal penances are secondary, permitted or imposed with the greatest discretion. Being essentially monastic, this life strives after solid virtues and practices; and though leaving full liberty to rightly inspired individual piety, it only allows, in community, the exercises of devotion of modern origin with reserve and measure.

**SILENCE**—One of the means of penance and mortification imposed by the Rule is perpetual silence. This silence assumes a particular characteristic with us, as it suppresses the use of speech, and replaces it by a certain limited number of conventional signs, to indicate the most necessary and usual things. This silence, however, becomes in practice



relatively easy, for it admits of just exceptions, as the religious may always speak with his Superior, and sometimes with others, according to the position he holds and the employment he fills.

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Such are the principal traits of the Cistercian life; prayer, penance and labor. The religious prays for himself and his neighbor; he prays in



THE INFIRMARY  
New Addition

the name of the Church; he offers expiation for his sins and for those of all people, and gains new merit for heaven. He labors, not to amass wealth, for he is bound by vow to be poor; he works in order to earn his own living, and to be able to help the needy. He lives away from the world, in order to be more intimately united with God; he knows that he is a victim, and he strives to live the life of one. St. Bernard, his glorious Father, has left him this motto: "Labor, latebrae et voluntaria paupertas, haec sunt monachorum insignia!"

Our Order is, at one and the same time, a shelter for innocence, a refuge for weakness and an assured hope for souls tossed about on the stormy sea of life.

It is a life most beautiful, most sanctifying, most sure. It has in store sweet and unexpected consolations.

These precious advantages we offer, in the charity of Christ, to the generous souls whom the Divine Master will have endowed with His grace, and shall lead to our solitude in order to speak to their hearts!

"Venite et videte quam suavis est Dominus!"

## APPENDIX

## Trappistines.

Our Lord called both sexes to the state of perfection and therefore to the practice of the evangelical counsels. In this way of sacrifice, far from allowing themselves to be outdone by men, women are capable of the greatest progress, because they walk therein with an uncalculating



A CORNER OF THE MONASTIC LIBRARY

generosity. Full of affection and devotion, their enthusiasm carries them to the height of heroism.

Women, as men, had their beginning—their first efforts to lead the perfect life. The consecrated virgins of the early Church were, in some sort, religious; even though still living in their parental homes. But when the cities and deserts began to be peopled by monks, pious women had it at heart to be their rivals in the love for self-immolation. First it was a sister, a mother or even a wife, who would not permit herself to be less generous than the one who had left them to follow the Divine Master.

There were virgins innocent and pure, along with widows of spotless life; there were also penitents who by this means had become holy. The solitudes beheld the spectacle of a Thais, a Mary of Egypt, a Pelagia



and many others, and holy Church invokes them at the same time as an Alexandra, a Euphrasia and a Paula. Everywhere, in the early ages, woman emulated man in charity, sacrifice, expiation and reparation.

When the religious life had been subjected to more clearly determined rules, to a discipline more exact, religious women, as well as men, adopted and followed them with fervor. As a general thing, whenever a new mode of life was instituted for men, there were to be found women to embrace it, and share in the accruing glory and merits. St. Basil wrote regulations for his mother and sister, as well as for the other holy companions who shared with them the same life, and aspired to spiritual perfection. When our Father, St. Benedict, left the world, his sister, St.



"GOD'S ACRE" OF THE ABBEY

Scholastica, imitated his example, and drew with her many holy women to share her life.

During the Middle Ages, it was common for each new religious institution to have both sexes participate in the advantages offered for their spiritual progress; and just as the men were termed monks, so the women, who were cloistered, received the name of nuns.

Cistercian nuns were first established, at the monastery of "Tart," near Dijon, France, in 1125. From this Motherhouse were sent colonies to found other convents, not so quickly as the houses for men, yet gradually they were to be found wherever the Cistercians existed. They were an honor to the Order, the rules of which they kept with fidelity. In later

times they became very numerous, counting as many as 900 monasteries in various countries. Woman is more persevering than man in the regular observances. Ordinarily relaxation does not begin with her; more inclined to attach herself to little things, to the small details of life she even runs the risk at times, of giving them too much importance; but for this very reason she avoids the rock against which Holy Scripture warns us; saying: "He who despises small things shall fall by little and little."

However, for the Cistercian nuns also the hour of decadence came. The reasons were, in general, the same as for the monks, and this spiritual



GENERAL VIEW OF FARM BUILDINGS

apathy gradually took possession of their houses, though not always in the same degree. In Spain the regular observance was persevered in for the greater length of time. There were several reforms, some following restorations introduced by the monks, others were inaugurated by themselves. Dom Augustin de Lestrange, having established his refuge at Val-Sainte, soon gathered near him, at "La Riedra" a number of nuns who, for the most part had been scattered from various ruined monasteries of France, and to these he gave his own regulations. Exiled like himself, they shared generously in the sufferings of their brethren in religion. Cast

about by the spirit of revolution they went from Switzerland to Russia, then to England and even to America, until they were recalled to France at the same time as the Trappists. They assumed the name of Trappistines and founded several monasteries, gradually increasing in numbers with the progress of time.

The nuns, like the monks, are divided into choir and lay sisters; like them also they sing the Divine Office, engage in manual labor, even in the fields, in proportion to their strength. They keep the same rules of silence, have the same hours for repasts and sleep and, in general, lead the same life.

Their direction depends on the Order, and they are given, according to their Constitutions, a priest of the Order as chaplain. Thus their spiritual guidance and instruction, given by a religious following the same rule, keeps them united in the same spirit and tends to develop powerfully the religious virtues, enabling both communities and individual souls to taste a precious peace.



### General Statistics.

At the present time there are monasteries of the Order in France, Belgium, Ireland, England, Italy, United States, Germany, Jugoslavia, Holland, Canada, Spain, China, Palestine, Congo, Japan and Brazil.

The total number of Trappist monks and lay-brothers is about 3,500, whilst the Trappistines count about 1,000.

Although there are two monasteries of nuns in Canada, yet we regret to say that, at present, there are none in the United States, a defect we hope and pray may be remedied in the not distant future. There is, however, a monastery of nuns in England, where English is the common language of the community.

FINIS







